

WHAT'S LEFT IN BOSTON

A Community Calendar of Progressive Cultural & Political Events

Asserting reproductive Freedom

When I step into the room I see her... The quilt, the mattress, the floor are soaked, puddled in dark congealed blood... Her skin is blue. Her mouth is colorless. She is dead... The sheets are stuck to her with dried blood from her womb. Did she abort herself? But she had money. She must have found a doctor... That doctor may or may not have failed to save her, but it is the law who killed her: the people who make the laws that try to force us to bear unwanted babies and force us into crudely botched abortions instead, the legislators and judges, the people who pressure the lawmakers, the people who enforce the rotten laws. I will not help them. -- Marge Piercy, Braded Lives, 1982

Today in America, our right to control our bodies is threatened. Recent events, such as the July Supreme Court decision in the *Webster* case and George Bush's recent veto of limited Medicaid funding for abortions, have shown us that reproductive freedom is too important to be left in the hands of the government where it may become a victim of shifting political trends. Despite the fact that abortion is currently legal, it is often unavailable. Poor women cannot obtain abortions due to scarce resources and lack of health insurance or Medicaid funding. Young women are restricted by consent laws which require them to receive the permission of their parents or a judge. Many women are unaware of or unable to take advantage of their reproductive choices due to geographical isolation or a lack of knowledge.



The fight for reproductive freedom has taken many forms. Some choose to pressure legislators, vote for pro-choice candidates, and take part in rallies and protests such as the NOW sponsored mobilization in Washington D.C. Others prefer the direct action tactics of countering anti-abortionists such as Operation Rescue, putting their bodies on the line to keep women's clinics open, and providing escorts for clinic patients. Still others are trying to develop alternative methods to keep abortion accessible if it is made illegal.

Now is the time to educate ourselves and organize in order to insure our reproductive freedom. There are several grassroots methods that can help to guarantee our reproductive choice. One of these is to build a network of feminist women's health and reproductive resources that would be prepared to continue to provide services in an underground manner if abortion is made illegal. Such services existed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but fell into oblivion as people became complacent about their right to choose. An example of this type of service is the "Jane Collective". This was a group of women in Chicago who provided abortion services ranging from counseling and referrals to medical procedures. In its early days, "Jane" used the services of sympathetic doctors, but in time the women in the collective learned to perform abortions themselves. The collective operated under conditions of strict secrecy, and faced the threat of arrests for homicide. In May 1972, a "Jane" front was raided, and a number of women were arrested or left the service. If abortion remains legal, this type of service could provide a less expensive feminist alternative to profit-based clinics, and could serve the many women who do not now have access to abortion and reproductive health care.

Our society teaches us to respect the medical establishment and its methods. This creates a climate of professionalization and awe that discourages us from taking responsibility for our own health care. It also leads us to devalue traditional folk wisdom and other alternatives.

Mechanical abortion in the early stages of pregnancy is a simple procedure requiring no incisions or general anaesthesia. Vacuum aspiration ("suction") abortions are the most common method used by clinics. Menstrual extraction is a similar technique developed by the Los Angeles Self Help Clinic in 1971. It uses simpler equipment (a syringe is used instead of a pump to create a vacuum and is less painful as it requires minimal cervical dilation). Menstrual extraction has been used effectively as a method of abortion up to the fifth week of pregnancy; it may also be used on a monthly basis to remove the contents of the uterus at the time of menstruation, shortening the period and reducing cramps. A knowledgeable support group can practice the technique on each other and the woman having the extraction can take part in the procedure. The main prerequisite is knowledge about and awareness of one's body and cycle.

There are many members of the early women's health services who are still active, or who are returning to activism in the face of renewed threats to abortion rights. It is important to make contacts with these people in order that their knowledge and skills may be passed on to the next generation of feminist health care activists. Many current health workers and clinic staffers are dedicated to reproductive freedom, and a number of them will undoubtedly continue to provide their services even if they are declared illegal. Despite the horror stories about "back alley" abortions which are often unsafe and unsanitary, there is no necessary connection between safety and legality.

Beware of Chance Acquaintances



"Pick-up" acquaintances often take girls autoriding, to cafés, and to theatres with the intention of leading them into sex relations. Disease or child-birth may follow

Avoid the man who tries to take liberties with you
He is selfishly thoughtless and inconsiderate of you

Believe no one who says it is necessary to indulge
sex desire

Know the men you associate with

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL HYGIENE 1925

Many steps can be taken to circumvent government regulation of reproduction. The trend to return jurisdiction over abortion to the states will mean that laws may vary from state to state. We could begin to develop an "underground railroad" to help women travel to states where abortion remains legal, providing information, transportation, and a safe place to stay. This may be especially important for young women, since age of consent laws are among the first restrictions likely to be placed on abortion.

Another program could involve setting up independent channels for the research, production, and distribution of new contraceptives and drugs, such as the early abortifacient pill RU-486, a progesterone blocker that causes the fertilized egg to be expelled from the uterus. This drug, in conjunction with prostaglandin, is currently being used for 25% of the abortions in France; it has been shown to be 96% effective when used between the fourth and sixth week of pregnancy. RU-486 is denied women in this country largely due to boycott threats by anti-abortionists and the fear of liability lawsuits. We can learn from groups of people with AIDS, who are circumventing the federal drug approval process and the pharmaceutical industry by means of Community Research Initiatives, underground distribution networks, and use of drugs and techniques that are not accepted by the medical establishment. We might create "Feminist Research Initiatives" that could compile databases of information and experiences of women practicing alternative contraception and abortion. Such initiatives might also encourage research into new methods. Feminist groups could put their monetary resources into manufacturing and distributing useful new drugs and techniques rather than into lobbying efforts to try to get the government to do so.

We can educate ourselves about existing alternative methods of abortion. Since the dawn of time, women have used many means to control their fertility and reproduction. It is only in the last century that abortion has come under medical control and been prohibited. Many abortion alternatives involve herbal and holistic methods. Knowledge of these methods is kept alive by

women in Native American and immigrant communities where Western medicine has not taken a strong hold. Midwives, witches, and traditional healers are also sources of this knowledge.

While women have used herbs throughout the ages for abortion, herbal methods should not be used casually. They can be dangerous if used improperly. The predominance of the allopathic medical modal and Judeo-Christian religion in our culture has made knowledge of herbal techniques difficult to come by. A number of resources exist, but they are often incomplete or contradictory. Pennyroyal, mugwort, and black and blue cohosh are the herbs most commonly used to induce early abortion. Traditional Chinese techniques include acupuncture and Compound Q (trichosanthin), which has recently made the news as a possible treatment for AIDS. Vitamin C in large doses has also been effective. Experienced herbalists can often be contacted through feminist centers or occult shops, and herbs are available at many health food stores.

As more and more people become disillusioned with the ability of the government to preserve our reproductive rights, interest in self-help alternatives is increasing rapidly, even among those who have until now depended on legislative tactics. The amount of knowledge to be uncovered, collected, disseminated, and put to use is immense. It would be extremely valuable for different groups currently working on abortion and contraception alternatives to create a network to share their knowledge and to teach each other new techniques.

Those who seek to prohibit abortion are denying the status of women as responsible moral agents. We must fight any institution or individual that would take away our rights as human beings capable of determining our best options given our personal circumstances. We must be ready to claim our reproductive freedom for ourselves when the "powers that be" ignore our voices and attempt to limit our choices. We must claim for ourselves the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, and be ready to take our bodies and our lives into our own hands.

--Liz Highleyman, Black Rose Collective, Anarchist Self-Health group.

Groups in Boston:

National Organization for Women
971 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, Ma.
phone: 782-1056
hot line: 782-4059

Planned Parenthood Clinics
1031 Beacon St.
Brookline.
phone: 738-1370 or 731-2525

Planned Parenthood Campaign
99 Bishop Allen Drive
Cambridge, Ma 02139

Mass Choice
14 Beacon St. Room 608
Boston 02108
phone: 720-1880

Bibliography:

Rita Arditti, Renato Duelli Klein and Shelley Minden, eds. *Test Tube Women: What Future for Motherhood?* Pandora Press, 1984, \$11.95

Betsy Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: Global Politics of Population Control and Contraceptive Choice*, Harper and Row, 1987, \$10.95

Claudia Dreifus ed., *Seizing Our Bodies: The Politics of Women's Health*, 1977, Vintage

O'Brien, Marg, *The Politics of Reproduction*, Routledge

Book Reviews:

Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford, 1988, \$11.50, 264pp

This book is as total a demolition of liberal democratic theory as we are likely ever to get. What is discouraging is how this orthodox outlook continues to thrive even after having been shredded by treatises like this. Following as it does two other remarkable books--the by now New Left classic, *Participation and Democratic Theory* and the brilliant *Political Obligation--The Sexual Contract* establishes Pateman as a radical thinker of first rank, one we would do well to heed.

Pateman demonstrates that wage-slavery, and hence modern capitalism, could not have been established without the *prior* subjugation of women in the patriarchal family. Thus the marriage contract was the prerequisite for the wage contract. The whole of liberal theory, from the seventeenth century on down, presupposes the separation of women out of (exclusion from) the public (civic) sphere and confinement to (subordination in) the personal (domestic, private) sphere. There is no way, under this theory, for women to be free and equal citizens.

While the main outlines of the argument are probably familiar to most people on the left, I'm sure the competence of her treatment will be found rewarding. Highly recommended.

Janet Farrell Smith, "Rights-Conflict, Pregnancy and Abortion", in Carol Gould, ed. *Beyond Dominations: New Perspectives on Women and Philosophy*, 1983, Rowman & Littlefield.

This philosopher greatly clarifies a very big issue in a very small space (of paper). She demonstrates the incoherence of formulating the abortion issue as a conflict between the fetus's "right-to-life" and a woman's "right-to-choose". "A conflict of rights presumes independent beings capable of making countervailing claims upon one another." But such is not the case with pregnancy. "A fetus's right to life requires access to organic support and nurture by the particular woman who conceived it. That is, the fetus's right to life crucially depends on the involvement of the very woman against whom its countervailing "right to life" is asserted... Because of the special nature of pregnancy, the positive welfare of the fetus presupposes the liberty of the woman to assent or refuse the pregnancy... Without this liberty, the well-being and hence survival of the fetus are called into question." Excellent essay. Highly recommended.

DECEMBER



Adrienne Rich

Childbirth is (or may be) one aspect of a woman's entire life, beginning with her own expulsion from her mother's body, her own sensual suckling or holding by a woman, through her earliest sensations of clitoral eroticism and of the vulva as a source of pleasure, her growing sense of her own body and its strengths, her masturbation, her menses, her physical relationship to nature and to other human beings, her first and subsequent orgasmic experiences with another's body, her conception, pregnancy, to the moment of first holding her child. But that moment is still only a point in the process if we conceive it not according to patriarchal ideas of childbirth as a kind of production but as part of female experience

If motherhood and sexuality were not wedged resolutely apart by male culture, if we could choose both the forms of our sexuality and the terms of our motherhood or non-motherhood freely, women might achieve sexual autonomy (as opposed to "sexual liberation"). Birth might then become one event in the unfolding of our diverse and polymorphous sexuality -- not a necessary consequence of sex, but one aspect of liberating ourselves from fear and the loathing of our own bodies.

Adrienne Rich



Drawing by Christine Roche.

Fri 1 through Dec 31. **The Alice James Poetry Cooperative**, a writer's cooperative emphasizing publishing by women, will be accepting submissions. Manuscripts should be 50-62 pages, typed, single-spaced, paginated with table of contents. Submit two copies, postcard to acknowledge receipt, SASE, \$10 reading fee. writers must live in New England. Send to Alice James Books, 33 Richdale Ave, Cambridge, Ma. 02140. Info: 354-1408

8:00 pm **Newton Arts Center** presents a poetry reading with **Elizabeth Bertlett Thompson, Milton Levy and Tony Artuso** at 61 Washington Park, Newtonville. \$2 admission, wine & cheese reception with the poets follows their reading. Info: 964-3424

8:00 pm **Free Love and Anarchism in the 19th Century:** a Black Rose Lecture with **Marty Blatt**, who will discuss the sexual politics of the individualist anarchists of the 19th century including **Josiah Warren, Victoria Woodhull, Stephen Pearl Andrews and Ezra Heywood**. At MIT Room 9-150, 105 Mass Ave, Cambridge. Free. Info: 524-0781

8:30 pm - midnight **Lesbian/Gay/Bi Swing and Ballroom Dance**. Casual attire, beginners welcome. Admission \$4.00. 2nd Floor if Ballet, Etc., 185 Corey Rd, Brookline. Info: 661-1792

Mon 4 4:30 pm **Honor Ford Smith**, Artistic Director for **Sisteren**, a Jamaican Women's Theater collective and editor of *Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women*, will speak on **Development: The Cultural Worker's Dilemma**. Her talk is co-sponsored by the Program in Women's Studies, the Theatre Arts Program, the Center for International Studies, and the Literature Faculty at MIT. At MIT Building E51, Room 332, 70 Memorial Drive, Cambridge. Info: 253-8844

7:30 **Boston Bisexual Women's Network Introductory Meeting**. At the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Come learn about activities, support groups, etc. Free. All women welcome. info: 247-6682 (BIS MOVIE)

Fri 8 through Dec 10 **Multicultural Theater Conference and Play Festival**. The New World Theater invites people to participate in a multicultural theater conference and play festival celebrating their 10th anniversary. The three-day event will bring together theater companies, actors, directors, playwrights and producers from across the country who, along with scholars, local artists, students and audiences will explore the cultural diversity of the American theater and the contemporary contributions of artists of color. All events, workshops are free and open to the public with the exception of play performances and the banquet luncheon on Saturday. At the UMass Amherst, Contact Dept of Theater for details.

Sat 9

The Cooperative Housing Task Force will hold a conference for Massachusetts limited equity housing cooperative leaders in Boston. Anyone who lives in or is interested in limited equity co-ops should attend. Info: CHTF, 7 Marshall St, Boston, 02108, 742-6780. Registration deadline: December 4

11:00 am - 12:30 pm **Single Mothers Open Support Group**. At the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Childcare provided. Info: 354-8807. Wheelchair Accessible.

Sun 10

11:00 am **Fourth Annual Julius and Ethel Rosenberg Observance**. Speaker: Atty. Marshall Perlin. At the Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St, Info: 266-6710

Mon 11

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm **Introduction to Democratic Socialism:** the fourth session of the fall course offered by the Boston School for Democratic Socialism. At the First Parish Church, 3 Church St, Harvard Sq. Admission \$10. Info: 426-9026

7:30 pm **South Africa Film/Video Night:** *The New Zimbabwe* (1982), a model of a peaceful conversion to a non-racial state and *Destructive Engagement*, (1987), the appalling story of the South African government's current attacks on neighboring Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola. At the Cambridge Friends Meeting Center, 5 Longfellow Park, near Harvard Sq off Brattle St. Info: 926-9649. Donations requested.

Thurs 14

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm **Cancer Support Group**. At the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Info: 354-8807. Wheelchair Accessible.

Fri 15

8:00 pm **The Market Socialist Alternative:** Black Rose Lecture with **Brent Cochran**, who will argue that an economy of worker managed enterprises operating within a regulated market environment will better achieve socialist goals, ameliorate capitalist ills and greatly strengthen political democracy. Free. At MIT Room 9-150, 105 Mass Ave, Cambridge. Info: 524-0781

Sat 16

10:00 am - 5:00 pm **Pueblo to People and Oxfam America** invite you to support third

cheese reception with the poets follows their reading. Info: 964-3424

8:00 pm **Free Love and Anarchism in the 19th Century:** a Black Rose Lecture with Marty Blatt, who will discuss the sexual politics of the individualist anarchists of the 19th century including Josiah Warren, Victoria Woodhull, Stephen Pearl Andrews and Ezra Heywood. At MIT Room 9-150, 105 Mass Ave, Cambridge. Free. Info: 524-0781

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Sat 2

10:00 am - 5:00 pm **Pueblo to People and Oxfam America** invite you to support third world cooperatives, women's organizations and refugees by attending a **Holiday Craft Fair.** At Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. Cambridge. Info: Mimi at 508-355-2347

11:00 am - 1:00 pm **Coming Out Discussion** for women of all ages. At the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Free. Info: 354-8807. Wheelchair Accessible.

11:00 am - 6:00 pm **African American Collectables Sale** presented by Cornerstone Books and Sugar Babes. Prints, Antiques, Books, Dolls, Figurines, Art. \$2.00, children free. At Freedom House, 14 Crawford St, Boston. Info: 861-7244 or 361-0537

2:30 pm - 5:30 pm **End Israeli Occupation.** Join us in commemorating two years of the Palestinian Intifada. Faneuil Hall, Congress St. People gather at 2:00 pm at Government Center T stop to march to Faneuil Hall. Speakers: Mel King, Terry Boulatta, Dessima Williams, and Guy Levi. Info: 354-0008

7:30 pm & 9:30 pm **Gala Cabaret to Benefit ASTAC,** the Salvadoran Association of Artists and Cultural Workers. Featured performers include the Underground Railway Theater, Jorge Arce, the United Fruit Company, Dean Stevens and the Bazaar Band. Refreshments, a raffle and a holiday gift sale included. Admission: \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. At the Underground Railway Theater, 41 Foster St, Arlington. Info: 643-6916. Wheelchair Accessible.

Sun 3

11:00 am **A Union Leader Belongs on the Street!** Myles Calvey, leader of the 5500 member Local 222, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the telephone workers on strike since August against NYNEX will speak. He began his career with New England Telephone during High School, became shop steward, chief steward, vice president and eventually in 1988, business manager of his union and earned a college degree in his mid-thirties at Boston College. Free. At the Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St. Info: 266-6710

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7:30 pm - 9:30 pm **Introduction to Democratic Socialism:** Third session of the Fall course. Admission \$10. At the Boston School for Democratic Socialism, 1st Parish Church, 3 Church St, Harvard Sq. Info: 426-9026

Tues 5

8:00 am - 1:30 pm **Creative Conflict Resolution:** a workshop with William Kreidler for elementary teachers and administrators. At 552 Main St., Watertown. Sponsored by Boston Area Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). \$65.00 ESR/ELNA members, \$80 non-members. Call ESR at 492-8820 to register.

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm **Tax Resistance Clinic** at the Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St, 3rd Floor, Sponsored by New England War Tax Resistance. Learn how you can join with other non-payers and stop putting your tax dollars into war weapons and intervention. Info: 731-6139

Wed 6

Work for Greenpeace. Greenpeace Action seeks a part time receptionist, 3 days/week 9-5 and an assistant regional director. Sense of humor, interest in environment essential. Send resumes by Dec 6 to: Attn: AW, Greenpeace Action, 709 Centre St, Jamaica Plain, Ma. 02130. Info: 983-0300

8:00 pm **Education For Action Annual Action Series:** Keynote Speaker: "Student Protest: Then and Now": Julian Bond, former SNCC activist, Georgia State Senator and Harvard Visiting Professor of Afro-American Studies. Leverett House Dining Hall, Harvard University. Info: 495-8604

Thurs 7

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm **General Meeting-Women's Community Cancer Project.** At the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge, Ma. Info: 354-8807. Wheelchair Accessible.

8

through Dec 10 **Multicultural Theater Conference and Play Festival.** The New World Theater invites people to participate in a multicultural theater conference and play festival celebrating their 10th anniversary. The three-day event will bring together theater companies, actors, directors, playwrights and producers from across the country who, along with scholars, local artists, students and audiences will explore the cultural diversity of the American theater and the contemporary contributions of artists of color. All events, workshops are free and open to the public with the exception of play performances and the banquet luncheon on Saturday. At the UMASS Amherst, Contact Dept of Theater for details and program literature.

1:30 pm - 5:00 pm **Our Planet, Our Self: A Deep Ecology Workshop.** Led by Joanna R. Macy. Workshop fee is \$35. Sponsored by the Center for Psychological Studies in the Nuclear Age. Pre-registration required. Info/registration: 497-1553

Dec 8,9,15,16 **A Rehearsal of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.** A guest performance at the Charlestown Working Theater, Produced by Moonlit Productions. A musical adaptation of the famous story by R.L. Stevenson, by Boston composer Brad Ellis, directed by Joann Green. Dec 8: 7:30 pm, Dec 9, 15, 16: 8:00 pm. Admission \$10, \$8 for students and senior citizens, free tickets in exchange for volunteer labor. At the Old Firehouse off Sullivan Sq, 442 Bunker Hill St, Charlestown. Info: 242-3534

Dec 8 and 9 at 7:30 pm, 3:00 pm matinee on Saturday. Underground Railway Theater presents a holiday spectacle: **The Firebird** and **A Child's Christmas in Wales.**

The Firebird is a giant shadow puppet spectacle based on Stravinsky's ballet suite. Deliciously humorous and piquant, *A Child's Christmas* evokes a family holiday full of youthful pranks and outrageous but lovable characters. At the new Arlington Center for the Arts in the former Gibbs Junior High School at 41 Foster St., one block off Mass. Ave, three lights beyond the Cambridge/Arlington line. Take the #77 bus north from Harvard Sq. Tickets: \$6 adults, \$4 for children under 12, available at the door or in advance through Arts Mail or at Frameworks (2067 Mass Ave, Cambridge). Info & tix: URT @ 643-6916 Wheelchair Accessible

8:00 pm **Help Us Raise the Roof.** Featuring Flor De Cana, Volo Volo, Right Time with the Bowdoin Health Center presents a multi-cultural benefit concert. Proceeds will help support the much needed renovation and expansion project. At the Strand Theater, 543 Columbia Rd, Dorchester. Tix: \$15 at the Bowdoin St Health Center, 200 Bowdoin St, Dorchester or at Carney Hospital, Out of Town, Nubian Notions, Skippy White's or by calling Concert Charge at 1-800-442-1854. Info: Ilene Geler @825-9800

Black Rose Lecture with Brent Cochran, who will argue that an economy of worker managed enterprises operating within a regulated market environment will better achieve socialist goals, ameliorate capitalist ills and greatly strengthen political democracy. Free. At MIT Room 9-150, 105 Mass Ave, Cambridge. Info: 524-0781

Sat 16

10:00 am - 5:00 pm **Pueblo to People and Oxfam America** invite you to support third world cooperatives, women's organizations and refugees by attending a **Holiday Craft Fair** at the Unitarian Church, 121 N. Pleasant St, Amherst. Info: Mimi at (508) 355-2347

10:00 am - 4:00 pm **Women's Writing Group** will hold a retreat at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Info: 354-8807. Wheelchair Accessible.

7:30 pm **Tibetan Celebration** in honor of the Dalai Lama winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Tibetan folk dancers and musicians, video, bazaar and more. At the New England Life Hall, 225 Clarendon St, Boston. Sponsored by the US-Tibet Committee. Info: 666-9426

Sun 17

5:00 pm **What's Left Collective Open Meeting.** The What's Left collective will have an open meeting for anyone interested in meeting the group and possibly getting involved doing the calendar. We need to find more people to work on the calendar, to do promotion, distribution, and help with getting listings. At the Red Book Store, 92 Green St, Jamaica Plain. Info: 522-1464

Thurs 21

7:30 am - 8:30 am **Vigil at EG&G.** EG&G runs the Nevada Test Site. Vigils are every third Thursday of the month. At 45 Williams St, Wellesley. On the T, take the Green Line to Eliot. Sponsored by New England Peace Test. Info: 361-0452

Sun 31

9:00 pm **City Life/Vida Urbana 8th Annual New Year's Eve Party.** Admission: \$10. At the Jamaica Plain Firehouse, 659 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. Cash Bar. Info: 524-3541

**Listings Deadline for January
will be December 16
Send to: What's Left in Boston
92 Green Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130**

or telephone: 522-9671

WHAT'S LEFT IN BOSTON

